

Contractors State License Board

The Contractors State License Board (CSLB) is one of the many boards, committees and commissions that make up the California Department of Consumer Affairs. The primary purpose of the CSLB is to license and regulate contractors for the public's protection. CSLB does this by setting standards for entering the practice and by enforcing laws and regulations dealing with contractors.

CSLB also works to curtail underground economy contracting activities by reducing unlicensed activities through stings, sweeps and other enforcement actions. (It is illegal for an unlicensed person to perform contracting work on any project for which the combined price of labor and materials is \$500 or more.)

The term "contractor" includes those individuals or firms that offer services to improve real property, including, but not limited to, home building, remodeling, room additions, swimming pools, painting, roofing, landscaping, plumbing, electrical, heating and air conditioning, and installation and repair of mobile homes.

Complaint jurisdiction

Complaints within CSLB's jurisdiction involve violations of the Contractors License Law, which may include failure of a licensed contractor to fulfill the terms of an agreement; poor workmanship that does not meet minimum trade standards; taking a down payment for home improvement in excess of 10 percent of the contract price or \$1,000, whichever is less*; abandonment; failure to pay subcontractors, material suppliers or employees; building code violations; use of false, misleading or deceptive advertising; and other violations of the law.

CSLB has jurisdiction over licensed and unlicensed contractors for up to four years from the date of an illegal act (and up to ten years for some hidden structural defects).

* The down payment for a swimming pool may not exceed 2 percent or \$200, whichever is less.



CSLB's complaint investigation procedures are designed to resolve problems between licensed contractors and consumers, subcontractors, and material suppliers. Where appropriate, CSLB will take legal action against a contractor for violations of the Business & Professions Code. In other cases, CSLB may provide help to consumers through mediation, arbitration, referral to other agencies, or providing information on other avenues for individual redress. These may include referring consumers to small claims court or referring consumers with private arbitration clauses in their contracts to the applicable arbitration process.

How to file a complaint

You may file a complaint by mail after obtaining a complaint form:

- Log onto the CSLB Web site at www.cslb.ca.gov. You may print out a complaint form to fill in and mail or complete the form online to print and mail; or
- Call 1-800-321-CSLB (2752) to request that a complaint form be mailed to you.

When you mail your complaint form, attach copies of contracts, change orders, canceled checks, or other pertinent information, and mail it to the appropriate office below:

- For complaints on work performed in Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and San Diego counties, send complaint forms to:

Norwalk Intake & Mediation Center
12501 East Imperial Highway, Suite 620
Norwalk, CA 90650

(800) 321-CSLB (2752)
FAX (562) 466-6064

- For complaints on work performed in any California county not mentioned above, send complaint forms to:

Sacramento Intake & Mediation Center
P.O. Box 269116
Sacramento, CA 95826-9116

(800) 321-CSLB (2752)
FAX (916) 255-4449

How complaints are handled

Because of resource constraints, CSLB must prioritize complaints based on:

- the order of receipt;
- the nature and seriousness of the allegations;
- the volume of work; and
- the budget/staffing situation.

Each written complaint is reviewed to determine if it falls within CSLB's jurisdiction. CSLB will send you confirmation that your complaint has been received. CSLB will also send a notice to the contractor to determine if the complaint can be resolved without further involvement of the Board.

If, after notification to the contractor, the complaint has not been resolved, you may be requested to provide additional information and/or documentation. You may also be contacted by a consumer services representative (CSR) who will attempt mediation, if applicable. If mediation is unsuccessful, the CSR may recommend settlement via a CSLB arbitration program (see other side), the complaint may be assigned to an enforcement representative (ER) for investigation, or the CSR may recommend you seek an alternative means of resolving your complaint.



If your case meets CSLB's jurisdictional requirements, the ER may conduct an investigation to determine if there are violations of the Contractors' License Law. Such an investigation may include interviewing you, the contractor, and any other parties who can furnish relevant information.

Violations of the law by a licensed contractor may result in a citation or formal charges against the contractor that could lead to suspension or revocation of the contractor's license. Citations may contain civil penalties of up to \$2,000 and/or orders of correction requiring the contractor to make repairs to your project or pay you to hire others to do so. Investigation by CSLB does not guarantee restitution to complainants.

If your primary interest is to gain restitution, you should utilize small claims court or get advice

from an attorney. If you are considering legal action to recover damages of \$5,000 or less, CSLB may provide you with information to help you file a small claims court action or you may consult the clerk of the small claims court; if your damages are more than \$5,000, you should consult an attorney. If you send CSLB documentation of a civil judgment or arbitration award against a licensed contractor, CSLB will notify the contractor that his or her license will be suspended if the judgment or award is not paid.

Contracting without a license is a violation of the law. In a case involving unlicensed activity, the Board may cite the unlicensed person and impose a fine of up to \$15,000 or refer the case to the local district attorney for prosecution. The Board cannot require an unlicensed person to make repairs to your project.

CSLB Arbitration Programs

CSLB offers two arbitration programs: a mandatory program for disputes involving alleged damages of \$7,500 or less and a voluntary program for disputes involving damage allegations between \$7,500 and \$50,000.

CSLB staff will determine whether the dispute meets the criteria to qualify for a CSLB arbitration program.

For more on these programs, see Mandatory Arbitration Program Guide or Voluntary Arbitration Program Guide, both available on the CSLB Web site or by request from 1-800-321-CSLB (2752).

CSLB arbitration is informal, takes about 120 days, and all decisions are binding and enforceable in court. CSLB will pay for an arbitrator who has some expertise in construction law and one expert witness free of charge. CSLB pays all administrative fees.

Information Disclosure

Upon request, CSLB provides information about the status of a licensed contractor's license and bond, as well as pending and prior legal actions.

If you want basic information about the status of a contractor's license or complaint disclosure, please consult the Board's Web site at www.cslb.ca.gov, or call the Board's toll-free number, 1-800-321-CSLB (2752).

If you would like information about pending or prior legal actions against a contractor, please consult the Board's Web site at www.cslb.ca.gov or call the legal action disclosure phone number at the appropriate CSLB office listed below:

Northern California	(916) 255-4041
Southern California	(562) 466-6021



Contractors State License Board
P.O. Box 26000
Sacramento, CA 95826-0026

www.cslb.ca.gov

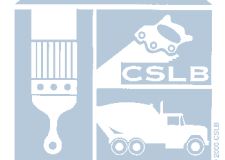
1-800-321-CSLB (2752)

A Consumer Guide to Filing

Construction Complaints

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CONTRACTORS
STATE LICENSE BOARD